

Jacob Naasz - SD - 2011

To put the Washington Week into words is a hard task. The experience was one that I will never forget. I was ecstatic when the speakers list was published. I counted down the months, weeks, days, and eventually hours before I arrived in D.C. I was aware that the Mayflower Hotel was impressive from online pictures, but nothing could have prepared me for its grandeur in person. But there was something even more impressive than the hotel. It was the other individuals that composed our group. I have never come across a group of more humble and down to earth group of peers. I knew from our Facebook group that we were an active group, but nothing again could have prepared me for our diversity and sheer amounts of tiger blood that flows in our veins. We hailed from nearly every imaginable socio-economic background, held beliefs as diverse as our backgrounds, but we were one. Our military mentors were also as diverse as ourselves, hailing from every branch, and held nearly every imaginable occupation within the military. We had debates amongst ourselves, but never were angered by another view. We joked about our homes, previous experiences. We all discussed our futures, our hopes, and our dreams. When we departed to return home, it was one of the most bitter-sweet moments I have experienced. We are so far from each other, but we are all together in our hearts. Many people have asked me about D.C. and about the other delegates. It is hard for me to quickly say to them what we are, so I tell them the following. We embody *E Pluribus Unum*.

Our speakers were impressive to say the least, but a few stand out in my mind as my favorites. My top five is composed of Namik Tan, Arne Duncan, Steven Chu, Clarence Thomas, and of course, President Barack Obama. I was highly impressed by Ambassador Tan's humility and honesty with us, Secretary Duncan was extremely thought provoking, Dr. Chu was amazingly bright, Justice Thomas was hilarious and truly provided a human element to the Supreme Court, and President Obama was immensely inspirational. To be in the presence of the most powerful man on the planet, and to imagine that he is an elected representative of the nation, and that he will relinquish power peacefully as his predecessors have done since George Washington, and that he is a mere five feet away was and still is mind blowing to me. The emotions and significance of having been by all of these individuals who shape our daily lives and the world in which we live is not lost on myself, nor will it ever be.